

## Multi-Level Governance as a Tool for Territorial Integration in Europe: Example of the Orient/East-Med Corridor

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## 4 MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AS A TOOL FOR TERRITORIAL INTEGRATION IN EUROPE: EXAMPLE OF THE ORIENT/EAST-MED CORRIDOR

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### Abstract

The initiatives related to the Pan-European, later TEN-T, and, finally, Core Network Corridors, are considered the first instrument for territorial cohesion in Europe – even before spatial development policies. Therefore, their significance in connecting various territories across Europe is indisputable. However, putting aside the material benefits, true European integration is not possible without efficient cooperation and coordination. This is particularly true for territories with various past histories, identities and planning cultures: the Orient/East-Med Corridor is a distinctive example of such differences.

After presenting the two main principles of territorial integration in Europe – supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, as well as their limitations, the concept of multi-level governance is elucidated. Multi-level governance, i.e. a simultaneous activation of both governmental and non-governmental actors at various jurisdictional levels, comprises two ideal types of institutions: general-purpose political institutions and single-purpose functional jurisdictions. Transnational territories are certainly affected by both types and thus the main question relates to the dynamics and mobilization of institutional and non-institutional actors, rather than revolving solely around strong hierarchy (e.g. between the administrative levels of nation states) or overlapping sectoral/functional entities (in certain domains at the transnational level). However, various types of cooperation are suitable for various administrative and territorial levels. Therefore, the central part of this paper shows forms of intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation, particularly elucidating the role of the following levels: transnational, cross-border and local. This is done by clarifying the main principles of multi-level governance relevant for different levels, illustrated with examples of vari-

ous cooperation forms perceived along the Orient/East-Med Corridor. The paper concludes that only a more intensive interaction among various disciplines and sectors can contribute to the sustainability of transport practices, enhancing territorial cohesion at the same time.

### **Keywords**

Territorial integration – transboundary cooperation – multi-level governance – inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation – Orient/East-Med Corridor

## **Multi-Level-Governance als Instrument für die territoriale Integration in Europa: Das Beispiel des Orient/East-Med Corridors**

### **Kurzfassung**

Die Initiativen im Zusammenhang mit den paneuropäischen, später TEN-T und schließlich den Kernnetzkorridoren gelten als wesentliche Instrumente für den territorialen Zusammenhalt in Europa – noch vor der Raumentwicklungspolitik. Ihre Bedeutung für die länderübergreifenden Verbindungen in Europa sind unumstritten. Wenn man die grundsätzlichen materiellen Vorteile außer Acht lässt, ist eine echte europäische Integration ohne eine effiziente Zusammenarbeit und Koordination nicht möglich. Dies gilt insbesondere für Gebiete mit unterschiedlicher Geschichte, verschiedenen Identitäten und Planungskulturen: Der Orient/East-Med Corridor ist ein markantes Beispiel hierfür.

Nach der Vorstellung der beiden wichtigsten Prinzipien der territorialen Integration in Europa – Supranationalismus und Zwischenstaatlichkeit – sowie ihrer Grenzen wird das Konzept der Multi-Level-Governance erläutert. Multi-Level-Governance, d.h. die gleichzeitige Beteiligung von staatlichen und nichtstaatlichen Akteuren auf verschiedenen Zuständigkeitsebenen, umfasst zwei ideale Arten von Institutionen: allgemeine politische Institutionen und funktionale themenbezogene Zuständigkeiten. Transnationale Gebietskörperschaften sind sicherlich von beiden Typen betroffen und so bezieht sich die Hauptfrage auf die Dynamik und Mobilisierung institutioneller und nicht-institutioneller Akteure, anstatt sich ausschließlich um eine starke Hierarchie (z.B. zwischen den Verwaltungsebenen von Nationalstaaten) oder überlappende sektorale/funktionale Einheiten (in bestimmten Bereichen auf der transnationalen Ebene) zu drehen. Verschiedene Formen der Zusammenarbeit eignen sich jedoch für verschiedene Verwaltungs- und Gebietsebenen. Daher fokussiert dieser Beitrag auf Formen der sektorübergreifenden und interdisziplinären Zusammenarbeit, insbesondere auf die Rollen der transnationalen, grenzüberschreitenden und lokalen Ebenen. Hierzu werden die Grundprinzipien der Multi-Level-Governance ins Zentrum gerückt, die für die verschiedenen Ebenen relevant sind und durch Beispiele für verschiedene Kooperationsformen hinterlegt werden, die entlang des Orient/East-Med Corridors ersichtlich werden. Der Beitrag kommt zu dem Schluss, dass nur eine intensivere Interaktion zwischen verschiedenen Disziplinen und Sektoren zu nachhaltigeren Verkehrsstrategien beitragen und gleichzeitig den territorialen Zusammenhalt fördern kann.

## Schlüsselwörter

Territoriale Integration – grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit – Multi-Level-Governance – intersektorale und interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit – Orient/East-Med Corridor

## 1 Introduction

Looking back at the history of European ‘rise and fall’ patterns, after each critical period Europe started to renew itself by improving the transport corridors. In other words, Europe has a long tradition of understanding the infrastructure, in particular the railway transport infrastructure, as a tool for achieving prosperity and stability – the first transnational initiatives date back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, coordinated action regarding the development of transport infrastructure in Europe started in the 1980s with calls for an infrastructure policy to underpin the Single Market Program in the European Union (EU), while the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992 included a new title on TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) policy, clearly addressing the need for a comprehensive grid of different transport modes. The first TEN-T guidelines were adopted in 1996 (Decision 1692/96/EC), while the initiative on the Pan-European Corridors and Areas ran in parallel. This initiative was developed during two Ministerial Conferences, in Crete (1994) and in Helsinki (1997), with the aim of connecting the EU-15 with the then-neighboring countries (ECMT 1997). At the same time, the TINA (Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment) process started in 1995 focusing on strengthening linkages between the western and eastern part of Europe. A decade later, the revised TEN-T guidelines identified the TEN-T (composed of thirty EU-priority transnational axes and projects) in order to support integration of the new Member States’ transport infrastructure into the existing network (CEC 2005). Its last revision from 2011, i.e. a further simplification of the TEN-T network known as the TEN-T Core Network Corridors (EC 2011; Regulation (EU) 1315/2013), consists of nine axes of European importance.

This brief overview of the transport-related initiatives is important as the TEN-T policy is one of the primary instruments of transboundary<sup>1</sup> cooperation in Europe. In fact, as transport corridor development involves not only infrastructural dimensions,<sup>2</sup> TEN-T policy is considered the first intervention in the domain of EU spatial development (Dühr/Colomb/Nadin 2010: 300). TEN-T is of an earlier date and comprises more con-

1 Following the trend of balanced spatial development (as promoted in the 1990s) towards territorial cohesion (addressed in the 2000s), numerous terms have been used to designate cooperation across national borders: cross-border, interregional, transnational, trans-border, trans-frontier, trans-European, supranational, intergovernmental, etc. Nevertheless, the concept of transboundary (trans-border) cooperation was suggested as the generic one (Dühr/Colomb/Nadin 2010: 30), as it includes various types of cooperation in its broadest (geographical) sense. To illustrate, the INTERREG program comprises three types of transboundary projects: cross-border (INTERREG A), transnational (INTERREG B), and interregional (INTERREG C).

2 According to Chapman, Pratt, Larkham and Dickins (2003), the main four dimensions of corridor development are: 1) infrastructure (physical and organizational infrastructure), 2) space (functions and morphology), 3) governance (politics and institutions), and 4) economy (finance and market conditions).

crete instruments on how to achieve balanced spatial development than are addressed in the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP), as a key EU document on spatial planning prepared during the 1990s (CSD 1999). Newer instruments on trans-boundary cooperation (e.g. INTERREG program 2014–2020) also tackle the issue of transport, as one of their thematic objectives is about promoting sustainability in the transport domain through: new investments to remove bottlenecks, improvement of secondary and tertiary networks and nodes as supplementary elements to the TEN-T corridor network, promoting high-quality environment-friendly transport modes (railway and waterway transport), etc. (Regulation (EU) 1301/2013).

Therefore, the significance of TEN-T policy and its implementation in connecting various ‘geographies’ and ‘histories’ is indisputable. However, material benefits such as: infrastructural improvements, removing bottlenecks, greater vehicle speeds, more efficient signalization, boosting operators’ capacity, etc. that appear as a result of EU policy implementation at lower territorial levels are not enough for true European integration. In fact, integration can be achieved by various instruments outside the technical and infrastructural domains. More precisely, integration starts with disseminating ‘best practice’ examples, across creating and sharing know-how, and finally leading to policy transfer (Dolowitz/Marsh 2000). In the domain of transnational cooperation, i.e. when it is highly unlikely to expect a fast change of policies and administrative structures, lesson-drawing is seen as a particularly relevant instrument. Therefore, ‘soft measures’ are needed to overcome legal, administrative and institutional differences (Dühr/Colomb/Nadin 2010). Finally, the learning process is seen as a genuine instrument to involve various stakeholders in concrete action, while its intensity is expected to be high in projects that focus on transnational issues (Colomb 2007). In other words, territorial integration in Europe is facilitated through various forms of horizontal, vertical and geographical cooperation and not by the measures created at the supranational level and then imposed at the lower spatial and governmental tiers.

Following this line of argumentation, European integration can be achieved only through efficient coordination of policy formulation and its effective implementation at various administrative/territorial levels (e.g. nation states, regions, cities), thus necessarily drawing upon the interdependence of different affected parties – not only public, but also private and civil sector. Hence, this paper seeks to elucidate the concept of multi-level governance (MLG) and illustrate its application to the case of the Orient/East-Med (OEM) Corridor, as a genuine example of the macro-region comprising territories with different past histories, identities and planning cultures, directly implying various forms of cooperation.

The paper is structured as follows. After a brief presentation of the ‘grand theories’ of European integration – neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, the paper focuses on the concept of MLG, explaining its main characteristics as well as recent criticisms. The central part of the paper elaborates the nature of interdependence between various governmental and non-governmental actors at different levels – transnational/macro-regional, cross-border and local. Such cooperation is illustrated with the examples of MLG, responding to previously mentioned levels respectively:

the OEM as a whole, its Dresden–Prague section, and Vienna as a spatial node. The paper concludes that only more intensive interaction between various disciplines and sectors can contribute to the sustainability of transport practices, enhancing spatial development at the same time.

## 2 Towards territorial integration in Europe

The EU as a unique political entity<sup>3</sup> is characterized by two main features: supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. Both refer to a group of nation states and their way of decision-making observed through the lens of sovereignty (Nugent 2006): supranationalism assumes that states transfer a certain amount of power to the higher entity, which is then allowed to make certain decisions mostly in the states' interests, though sometimes decisions may negatively affect the states; in contrast, intergovernmentalism as an approach implies that all the decisions related to the nation states are made cooperatively, i.e. taking into account certain interests and trying to reach consensus, thus without giving any power to higher institutions.

As mentioned, these concepts may refer to the method of decision-making in international organizations; nevertheless, they are also closely related to the so-called 'grand theories' of integration: neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism. Neo-functionalism as an approach posits that the European integration process is based on the principle of 'spillover' (Nugent 2006; Schmitter 2004). First, functional spillover appears when integration in one policy area affects integration in another, as they are mutually connected. Moreover, functional integration leads to political integration, as major trends of European consolidation (e.g. the Single European Market) designated a close merging of certain functional activities with national policies, i.e. the positive and negative externalities of functional spillover do not manifest themselves spontaneously (Piattoni 2016). In relation to the aforementioned feature of supranationalism, the main drivers for the spillover process are certainly supranational institutions (e.g. the European Commission), though the role of national governments and domestic interest groups cannot be underestimated (Hix 2005). As certain slowdowns in European integration could not be explained by the approach of neo-functionalism, other, more 'state-centric' theories appeared.

According to intergovernmentalism, the main drive for European integration is within the nation states themselves, which, based on their free will, decide to cooperate in certain fields. More precisely, similar national interests between several states affect the dynamics of integration (Hoffmann 1982). As assumed, compromises must be found in order to secure cooperation. The national governments control the process of integration, whereas EU institutions facilitate the process, i.e. any supranational intervention only serves the interest of the nation states (Moravcsik 1998). Similarly, the direct involvement of their sub-national entities is prevented (Piattoni 2016).

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3 The EU is considered unique (*sui generis*) as it differs from any other international organization, on the one hand, and from a federal political system, on the other.

These approaches are in essence rather exclusive in terms of responsibility in decision-making – EU institutions vs. nation states. In practice, the integration process involves governmental levels other than just the national, as well as other stakeholders, not only those from the public sector.

### 3 The concept of multi-level governance (MLG)

Multi-level governance appeared as a consequence of the ‘shift from government to governance’<sup>4</sup> in the 1980s. In the domain of EU studies, such a transformation referred to the integration process placing an emphasis not on the roles of Member States and the EU, but on explaining how the system actually works (Faludi 2012). MLG has two main aspects: the ‘multi-level’ aspect, addressing interdependence between different government levels – supranational, national and sub-national; and the ‘governance’ aspect, which implicates cooperation among actors belonging to various sectors – public, private and civil (Bache/Flinders 2004; Böhme/Zillmer/Toptsidou et al. 2015; Piattoni 2016). When compared to the aforementioned types of decision-making, MLG has major differences and similarities, briefly described as follows:

- > In contrast to the supranational approach, MLG assumes EU institutions to be only one of many actors in the decision-making (or policy development) process; the supranational level does not have the authority to take over decisions relevant for other participating levels. Nevertheless, as assumed by the supranational approach, not only governmental but also other institutions (business associations, political parties, trade unions) can appear as relevant players in decision-making, which is in line with MLG – both governmental and non-governmental actors are eligible to take part in the MLG process (Nugent 2006; Hix 2005).
- > Contrary to the intergovernmental approach, in MLG the national authorities do not own an exclusive right to the development of policies whose implementation is relevant for lower tiers of government; rather, both supranational, on the one hand, and regional and local, on the other hand, are actively engaged in policy activities (Nugent 2006).

As the concept of MLG comprises two main aspects – multi-level politics and governance, there is a need to further elucidate its two types – type I and type II, as defined by Hooghe and Marks (2003, 2010), still closely connected to understanding the governmental hierarchy as well as ‘functional spillover’. Type I MLG refers to general-purpose political institutions, whereby formal authority is spread from nation states to supranational institutions as well as to the sub-national authorities (Piattoni 2016). The focus here is on the governing structures whereas the jurisdictions do not intersect (Faludi 2012). Type II MLG is about single-purpose functional jurisdictions, i.e. specialized, task-specific organizations (governmental and non-governmental), which

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4 The ‘shift from government to governance’ actually refers to the diminished role of governmental hierarchy, at the same time highlighting the stronger influence of non-state actors who are mutually interdependent in a collaborative policy-making process directed towards achieving common interests (see: e.g. Rhodes 1996; Davoudi/Strange 2009).



criss-cross judicial boundaries (Faludi 2012). However, these types are ideal – in practice MLG is understood as a process which involves institutions at various administrative/territorial levels and functional non-state organizations, as well (Piattoni 2016).

Such a classification of MLG is important for a better understanding of its three main criticisms. First, Faludi (2012: 199 f.) refers to the ambiguity between MLG as the concept that highlights the multi-level polities/institutions, on the one hand, and the shift from government to governance. According to the same source, vertical relations within a multi-level jurisdictional system are much more highlighted than the notion of governance – understood as networking among various sectors (public, private and civil). More precisely, in MLG there are networks created between various authorities, but not with non-state actors. Second, the MLG concept provides no explanation of the importance of certain levels, i.e. it is not clear which government level should be particularly active in governance processes (Jordan 2010). Finally, and similarly to the above, the nature of the dynamics is not clear, i.e. which institutional and non-institutional actors are mobilized in the MLG (Piattoni 2016).

#### **4 MLG along the Orient/East-Med Corridor: a conceptual and empirical overview**

Previous criticisms revolve around the need to address the important territorial/administrative levels when entering the process of MLG. However, this cannot be done without taking into account the general reason behind such a collaborative process, as specific tasks call for certain jurisdictions (Perić 2016). Therefore, the emphasis is again placed on the dual nature of the MLG concept – territorial hierarchy and functional unity. Nevertheless, according to the ‘Rubikube’ of MLG,<sup>5</sup> there are nine important ‘levels of action’ in the MLG process. The following section describes three levels – transnational/macro-regional, cross-border and local, with the conceptual background and practical illustrations being provided for each of these. More precisely, the conceptual framework covers the aims, various forms and outcomes of cooperation, while the empirical analysis demonstrates the focus of cooperation (i.e. type of MLG), conditions and reasons for cooperation, and the roles of various stakeholders.

##### **4.1 The role of the transnational/macro-regional level in MLG**

The transnational/macro-regional level in the process of MLG is gaining increasing attention as the nation states (and their territories) become more dependent on each other (Böhme/Zillmer/Toptsidou et al. 2015). In order to boost their competitiveness in the complex global world, the achievements of one nation state cannot stay isolated from the broader context it belongs to – be this the cross-border region, macro-region or entire continent. The main aim of transnational cooperation is to strengthen

5 ESPON’s ‘Rubikube’ illustratively explains the concept of territorial governance through the following layers: 1) levels of action, 2) interactive resources, and 3) dimensions. Levels of action comprise: supranational/EU, transnational, cross-border, national, interregional, regional, sub-regional, local and sub-local levels (ESPON 2013).

the functional macro-region, rather than to promote interaction solely between administrative jurisdictions (Piattoni 2016). The essence of such macro-regional cooperation lies in the learning process: the point is to move beyond a pure ‘exchange of experiences’ on domestic issues and to reach the phase of making a transnational strategy as the most complex task (Colomb 2007). In other words, one of the main features of transnational cooperation is its strategic capacity to disseminate knowledge (about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas) from one social context to another (Dolowitz/Marsh 2000).

With this in mind, the main forms of cooperation at the transnational level are intersectoral and interdisciplinary. Intersectoral cooperation assumes not only action of the governmental bodies (mainly national and supranational), but involvement of other parties – private sector actors (e.g. transport network operators) as well as NGOs (e.g. research associations). Each of these has a different perspective on the problem addressed within the macro-region, therefore their interests and knowledge need to be taken into due account in order to make effective transnational strategy. Interdisciplinary cooperation is tightly connected to functional macro-regions, i.e. the expertise in one policy domain is usually not enough to tackle the transnational issues; rather, it calls for cooperation in various fields (e.g. ‘functional spillover’ in case of integrated spatial and transport development). Finally, the outcomes of transnational cooperation should affect the institutional and policy changes. This can be seen through changes in ways of conceptualizing policies (e.g. integrated concepts) or in the manner of institutional collaboration (e.g. bottom-up approach).

### **Example: ARL initiative on the Orient/East-Med Corridor**

An example that illustrates the nature of transnational cooperation relevant for the type II of MLG, i.e. with the focus on the functional macro-region rather than the strict involvement of governmental structures, is the cooperation among various interested parties under the umbrella of the ARL on the project “Spatial and Transport Development in European Corridors: Example Corridor 22, Hamburg–Athens”.

The initial idea for this cooperation stems from the EU TEN-T policy including the OEM Corridor as one of nine Core Network Corridors (EC 2011). However, the approach of the ARL working group is different from the EU one. First, the project clearly stresses the importance of ‘functional spillover’ along the corridor as the investments in transport infrastructure influence spatial development. Second, the project implies genuine macro-regional<sup>6</sup> cooperation as it considers not only the EU Member States, but also the third countries in the Western Balkan. More precisely, the project’s territorial scope covers two main routes from Hamburg to Athens – one via Romania and Bulgaria, as the EU Member States, and the other through Serbia and North Macedonia, as this is the shortest way leading from Budapest to Thessaloniki (400 km) based on the Pan-European Corridor X (ECMT 1997). Finally, as the project leader is an independent research organization, the project in its nature illustrates a bottom-up initiative, thus complementary to the EU approach on transnational cooperation, which is usually strongly affected by global (political) influences.

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<sup>6</sup> According to its definition, the macro-region is an integrated framework relating to Member States and third countries in the same geographical area (Piattoni 2016: 80).

In order to obtain reliable inputs about the spatial and transport issues along the corridor, leading to the dissemination of knowledge from one context to another, a wide variety of stakeholders were involved.<sup>7</sup> More precisely, through a number of workshops in the seven hot-spots, i.e. places in capital cities along the corridor likely to be affected by transport development, the sharing of the main visions, priorities and challenges was possible thanks to support from local key stakeholders in spatial planning and transport domains – representatives of various departments within the city administration, and experts from various domains (public enterprises, academia). In order for certain views on the hot-spots to be easily applicable, the next step of the cooperative project approach was to address the representatives of the responsible ministries, public infrastructural enterprises, and the private sector (developers, logistic companies). Applying such a holistic approach had twofold results. The input from the state authorities and other nationally relevant stakeholders was important for the ARL international working group in terms of getting a clearer picture of the current status and future incentives in the states along the corridor. At the same time, the working group took on an advisory role, trying to elucidate methods and principles for the nation states to easily correspond to the European standards, trends and needs in the domain of spatial and infrastructural development. As an outcome of such mutual learning, an outline for future transnational strategy on integrated spatial and transport development – the key aim of the cooperation at the macro-regional level – has been defined by the ARL international working group.

#### **4.2 The role of the cross-border level in MLG**

Cross-border regions are part of the MLG structure of policy-making and therefore a key element of effective transnational cooperation (Dühr/Colomb/Nadin 2010). Nevertheless, they are far from posing a threat to the authority of the nation states over these policies (Perkmann 2003). Namely, national governments are regaining importance as a central decision-making body (Böhme/Zillmer/Toptsidou et al. 2015). Therefore, the success of the MLG process depends on the relation of the nation state towards the supranational and sub-national levels. The relation of the nation state towards the supranational level is important in the stage of policy-making; however, when it comes to the implementation of these policies, the regional level has the key role in its position to motivate local players from different sectors to act together (Böhme/Zillmer/Toptsidou et al. 2015). Therefore, although the main aim of cross-border cooperation is to solve a certain regional issue, it affects both the national and local levels.

Cross-border cooperation mainly revolves around the interaction between various administrative jurisdictions. It is usually prescribed by certain supranational policies (e.g. TEN-T policy), although it may appear as a bottom-up initiative when there is a need to solve a cross-border issue (e.g. a great environmental problem). As a rule, the national administrative/territorial level cannot be neglected in cross-border issues. It is the level on which the transnational policies are ‘translated’ and adjusted to the national context of pre-existing policies and relevant institutional frameworks. However,

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7 For more on the inductive research approach applied in the project, see Braun/Perić (2017).

it is the regional level that is the most important for implementation of the policies: the regional level provides the framework for cooperation among various disciplines relevant for the issue at hand; also, the regional level is responsible for communicating the policy effects among locals, usually providing room for the feedback observed at the local level. Therefore, the outcome of cross-border cooperation is strengthening the regions as the bodies responsible for both the top-down and bottom-up coordination of policies.

### **Example: the railway link Dresden–Prague**

The construction of the new railway line in the cross-border region between Germany and the Czech Republic is a successful example of type I MLG, i.e. when relevant authorities from various territorial levels are included in order to achieve feasible solution. Furthermore, keeping in mind that in practice it is hardly possible to achieve only one type of MLG as the process revolves around a certain problem, this case is a genuine example not only of synchronized cooperation among various governmental levels, but also of the involvement of other relevant parties.

As the railway link between Dresden and Prague was listed as one of the main bottlenecks along the OEM Corridor (Regulation (EU) 1316/2013), due to the demanding topographical situation of the Elbe valley, it was necessary to plan a new (high-speed) route instead of upgrading the current one. As the line is of utmost importance for the German Free State of Saxony, several studies have been initiated by this state authority in previous years. However, the EU decision on eliminating the bottlenecks along the OEM Corridor designated the start of preparing the technical documentation necessary for constructing the section.

In line with the above, a key role in the cross-border cooperation was assigned to the state government, i.e. the Saxon State Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labor and Transport. This institution organized preparation of the technical, environmental and geological documentation. For the studies of technical infrastructure, several companies from both Germany and the Czech Republic were involved in order to align national technical regulation (i.e. for high-speed lines). The involvement of various infrastructural managers was supported by the Czech Ministry of Transport, as a relevant body for cooperation with the state of Saxony. Such horizontal cooperation was a key step for further vertical cooperation involving various levels. First, the German Federal Ministry of Transport included the joint project on the Dresden–Prague railway section in its Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan (*Bundesverkehrswegeplan 2030*), thus announcing its national importance. Second, through establishing the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), the border regions in Germany (Saxon Switzerland) and the Czech Republic (Ústí region) actively participate in finding a proper solution for traffic and noise pollution in the cross-border region. Finally, the EGTC provides a useful framework not only for vertical cooperation with the state of Saxony and the Czech Republic, but also for intersectoral cooperation, including the private sector and the general public on the issues relevant for implementing the project (SSMEALT 2016).<sup>8</sup>

8 Detailed information on various aspects of the OEM Corridor section Dresden–Prague is presented in the chapter *Infrastructure Development and Its Effects on Transport, Demography and Employment: Example of a New Rail Link Dresden–Prague* in this book.

### 4.3 The role of the local level in MLG

The local level in the MLG process is considered a decisive one. There are two main reasons behind such a statement. First, the local level involves the stakeholders who know the local situation best – local needs, potential, challenges and threats that may appear while dealing with certain issues (Böhme/Zillmer/Toptsidou et al. 2015). Secondly, the actions conducted at the local level are pragmatic and problem-oriented (Scholl 2012). Similarly to achieving the functional macro-region as the main goal of transnational cooperation, at the local level the focus is again more on the place itself than on interaction among administrative bodies. However, while transnational cooperation usually remains at the level of an ‘exchange of experiences’, the final aim of the cooperation between various local stakeholders is the implementation of certain measures (Böhme/Zillmer/Toptsidou et al. 2015).

In terms of the main forms of cooperation perceivable at the local level, two types are dominant: intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation. First, the structured partnerships between policy-makers, private sector and civil society are necessary to mobilize wider societal support for development. Usually, these sectors have various visions for solving certain issues (e.g. the private sector goes for profit, which, sometimes, can negatively affect the citizens’ needs). Therefore, the focus is on well-elaborated collaboration, which, finally, leads to fulfillment of mutual interests. Second, local issues demand close cooperation between a wide variety of relevant experts. More precisely, the synergy among different knowledge pools, skills, know-how and tools facilitates the governance process, thus, ultimately, contributing to the transformation of thinking patterns as the main outcome of the changed governance model at the local level.

#### **Example: the main railway station in Vienna**

The importance of the local level in the MLG structure is illustrated by the case of the Vienna main railway station. It is, in fact, an elucidation of the MLG type II, i.e. governing structure revolving around a certain functional/sectoral activity – in this case the railway node of Vienna. As transport and spatial development, particularly at the nodal level, can be considered ‘two sides of the same coin’ (Scholl 2016), functional spillover in the infrastructural domain affected the spatial development of the railway station’s catchment area.

The first idea for building the new main railway station in Vienna appeared in 2005 based on the need for a more efficient flow of international trains. For that purpose, it was necessary to remove the two dead-end stations and construct the new through-put station. With the demolition of two terminal stations as well as their shunting yard, a great land reserve (55 ha) appeared in the center of the city. Therefore, the Austrian Federal Railways needed a specific tailor-made approach for the integrated spatial and transport development of the entire area.

When it comes to the local governance level, the issue at hand is usually related to a concrete project. Therefore, the main role in coordinating the activities, tasks, responsibilities and competencies is devoted to a certain management body. In the case of Vienna, the result of a holistic leadership style is the dense network of knowledge

and procedures, whereby the project management serves as a link for the various requirements of the different parties (Hartig 2016). In terms of interdisciplinary cooperation, the project network included representatives from the sectors of architecture, urban planning and railway transport, mainly from the City of Vienna. Nevertheless, the vertical cooperation was mainly forced between the City of Vienna and the Austrian Federal Railways, as the main stakeholders in constructing the station (Schwab 2016). The EU as a supranational body was also a significant player as it donated 10% of total investment (109 million euros). In terms of intersectoral cooperation, private developers recognized the opportunity for the further economic development of the multifunctional transport hub, thus mainly investing in its mixed-use catchment area.

## 5 Concluding remarks

To achieve collaboration among a wide variety of experts, different administrative bodies, and, in particular, various sectors is not an easy task. This becomes clear when a difficult issue, such as integrated spatial and transport development, is at stake. However, the previous examples show a constant. On the one hand, the European bodies, be they office authorities from the European Commission, European Investment Bank (EIB), or Europe-focused research institutions, are always present no matter which administrative/territorial level takes a leading role in the process of the MLG. On the other hand, despite the European incentive, the body that coordinates the actions of multiple stakeholders from various spatial levels is the key factor for a successful MLG process. However, it is not always clear what the role, position and responsibility of this entity should be. For example, its coordinative role is directly perceivable at the local level, when it is simple to reach stakeholders familiar with the local situation. The cross-border level demands more effort for the coordinative body as it is not only local factors that affect the problem at hand, for instance national social systems, economic prosperity, planning cultures, technical parameters, etc. are also relevant. However, the most complicated situation appears when trying to achieve effective MLG with the transnational level body as a coordinator.

From the previous examples that elucidated the nature of MLG at various territorial scales along the OEM Corridor the following conclusions can be drawn. The local 'level of action' calls for MLG type II – functional spillover dominates over the territorial hierarchy. In the example of the Vienna main railway station, the integration of various experts, municipal spatial and transport departments, the national railway company, and even the EIB was managed by the local body – an internal office established by the Austrian Federal Railways and the City of Vienna. This expert body facilitated cooperation not only between the relevant offices for spatial planning, architecture and transport, but also with the private sector directly interested in investing in the catchment area of the railway station, as well as with the citizens, who were constantly informed about the progress of the project. Judging from the efficiency of the project implementation, the Viennese local management office demonstrates the position and responsibilities the coordinative body at the local 'level of action' of MLG should undertake.

The cross-border 'level of action' illustrates MLG type I, as cooperation between the nation states necessarily implies the involvement of various administrative levels. The example of Dresden–Prague cross-border cooperation clearly indicates the leading organization: the state administration – the Saxon State Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labor and Transport. The role of this regional level administrative body is crucial for several reasons. First, vertical cooperation (both with the EU bodies and municipalities) runs much more smoothly for regional institutions than for national bodies – on the one hand, there is larger EU financial support for regions (e.g. Structural Funds) than for the nation states; on the other hand, the region is seen as a link between national and local administrative units in the majority of European countries. Second, as the example of the cross-border railway axis shows, the state ministry proved to be a successful facilitator among various expert stakeholders from various sectors – spatial planning departments, infrastructural companies, environmental and geological offices, etc. Therefore, the state ministry illustrates a role model of an internal governmental body, i.e. a body within the nation state responsible for intergovernmental issues. Moreover, the Saxon Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labor and Transport was proactive in the creation of the cross-border EGTC, which ideally should grow into the transnational EGTC along the entire OEM Corridor.

Finally, at the transnational 'level of action', MLG type II prevails. In the case of the OEM Corridor, coordination was centered on an issue of integrated spatial and transport development. Consequently, the involved parties represented experts from various sectors affiliated with the abovementioned issues; the involvement of administrative bodies at various levels was not a priority. Most importantly, as the entire work on transnational corridor development was initiated by the ARL, its coordinative body (international working group) took the lead in organizing cooperation with other partners along the corridor. In the case of finalized INTERREG projects, the usual follow-up is establishing the EGTC, which operates on the same principles as the ARL working group – involving experts from the transnational area. Nevertheless, in addition to horizontal cooperation, the EGTC also includes the representatives of various administrative bodies. Such an external governance platform secures the three main types of cooperation essential for formulating the transnational strategy: cooperation across various territorial scales, between administrative levels and among different sectors.

What are the prospects for the OEM Corridor? The following guidelines actually serve as a basic reminder for conducting effective MLG at the transnational scale:

- > The most developed parts of the OEM Corridor (i.e. Germany and Austria) have to initiate collaboration with their southern counterparts;
- > In turn, post-socialist states, particularly including the current EU candidates (Serbia and North Macedonia) should develop the instruments for 'connectivity' and thus bridge the gap between north and south;
- > Such 'connectivity' should not be limited only to the physical, i.e. logistical domain; moreover, it is important to build the connection in social, cultural and political terms;

- > For the cooperation to be effective, it is necessary for the participating members to draw upon joint sovereignty and solidarity.

To sum up, policies relevant for the entire area of Europe will not bring about its cohesion. They remain rather vague and without clear implementation mechanisms. On the contrary, effective collaboration in solving complex issues at the transnational scale should be considered the key element in: 1) making Europe a desirable environment for Europeans, and 2) bringing a competitive edge to Europe when compared to other global regions.

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